1.   (Once Amended) In a system for encoding video image data with at least first and second successive encoding passes of said video image data, where each encoding pass includes a number of executable steps and at least one of said executable steps includes a number of executable first order sub-steps, a method for encoding video image data comprising:

(a)   identifying first order sub-steps in at least one of said first and second encoding passes as being necessary or unnecessary for execution of said encoding passes;

(b)   executing said necessary sub-steps during said first and second encoding passes; and

(c)   excluding at least one sub-step from execution during an encoding pass for which that sub-step is unnecessary.

7.   (Once Amended) A set of instructions residing in a storage medium, said set of instructions capable of being executed by a processor to implement a method for encoding video image data with at least first and second successive encoding passes of said video image data, where each encoding pass includes a number of executable steps and at least one of said executable steps includes a number of executable first order sub-steps, such that first order sub-steps in at least one of said first and second encoding passes are identified as being necessary or unnecessary for execution of said encoding passes, the method comprising:

(a)   executing said necessary sub-steps during said first and second encoding passes; and

(b)   excluding at least one sub-step from execution during an encoding pass for which that sub-step is unnecessary.

13.   (Once Amended) A system for encoding video image data with at least first and second successive encoding passes of said video image data, where each encoding pass includes a

number of executable steps and at least one of said executable steps includes a number of

executable first order sub-steps, said first order sub-steps in at least one of said first and second

encoding passes being identified as necessary or unnecessary for execution of said encoding

passes, said system including:

a video compressor adapted to encode video image data during said at least first and

second encoding passes; and

a bit rate controller coupled to said video compressor and adapted to control said video

compressor during said at least first and second encoding passes, such that said video compressor

is adapted to execute said necessary sub-steps during said first and second encoding passes and

exclude at least one sub-step from execution during an encoding pass for which that sub-step is

unnecessary.